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# U.S. May Have Secret Plans for A First Strike

Despite repeated denials over the years, there is secret evidence that U.S. military strategists have plans for a nuclear first-strike option against the Soviet Union. The MX missile is an important part of this planning.

A credible first-strike force requires land-based, highly accurate missiles capable of knocking out an enemy's offensive missiles without serious retaliation. The United States could have such a capability by the early 1990s.

The story of our potential first-strike force is told in secret reports of the Defense Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. My associate Dale Van Atta has obtained copies of these reports.

One secret ACDA document includes a chart with the candid title, "Outcome of Hypothetical U.S. First Strikes, 1993."

The chart incorporates some crucial assumptions into its calculations. For one thing, it assumes that the Soviet Union would "not launch out from under the attack"—in other words, that the Soviets would, for some reason, not launch their nucle-

ar missiles at the first warning of a U.S. attack or while our missiles were raining down death and destruction on them.

The equation also admittedly "ignores the impact of X-rays, neutron radiation, electromagnetic pulse, thermal effectives [and] possible problems of variations in yield, [accuracy] and reliability of U.S. weapons."

With all these highly favorable—not to say unlikely—assumptions, and an adjustment for only 100 MX missiles instead of 200, the secret projection indicates that, after a first strike by our modified Minuteman III, Trident II and MX missiles, not a single Soviet missile silo would survive.

According to a recent Pentagon report, the Soviets now have a total of 1,398 missile silos at various locations. Planners figure on two U.S. nuclear warheads to take out each Soviet silo. These would have to be warheads with "hard-target kill capability," meaning able to destroy underground missile silos reinforced with steel and concrete. (In macabre nuclear parlance, "soft" targets are cities, and, of course, people.)

The best U.S. hard-target missiles are 300 recently upgraded Minuteman IIIs, each carrying three warheads. That's enough, in theory, to wipe out 450 of the Soviet missile silos.

The Navy is developing a missile

with the same capability, the D5, for use in the Trident II submarine-launched missile system. The 150 D5s planned will would have 10 warheads, for a theoretical "kill" score of 750 Soviet silos.

Then comes the MX, a super-accurate missile capable of dropping its warhead within 304 to 425 feet of a target. No known silo could withstand a nuclear blast that close. The 100 MX missiles, with 10 warheads apiece, would put the United States over the top in destructive power. A secret disarmament-agency report understates it this way: "The addition of highly accurate MX missiles would give the U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile force a much improved time-urgent hard-target kill capability."

It's a matter of simple arithmetic: some 3,400 highly accurate nuclear warheads to aim at probably no more than 1,400 Soviet missile silos by the early 1990s. With two missiles presumed necessary to take out each silo, 600 are left over to drop on other "hard" targets, such as the Soviets' command-and-control bunkers.

Not so simple is the possible Moscow reaction. The ACDA report warns that the Kremlin might not wait docilely for a future U.S. first-strike checkmate. "Under extreme crisis conditions," the report concludes, "Soviet leaders might perceive pressures to strike first."